

ROGER BERLINER COUNCILMEMBER DISTRICT 1 CHAIRMAN
TRANSPORTATION, INFRASTRUCTURE
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

## REMARKS OF COUNCILMEMBER ROGER BERLINER ON INTRODUCTION OF GREEN BANK BILL (18-15)

April 21, 2015

Colleagues, we have a proud legacy when it comes to protecting the environment, promoting sustainability, and supporting a local green economy. We realize it is fundamental to our future. Tomorrow is Earth Day. And every Earth Day, if we can, our Council either passes groundbreaking sustainability measures or introduces them. Last year we passed a passel of them, 11 in all, including a measure that will result in our county using 100% clean energy in the next fiscal year.

Today, in honor of Earth Day, I am introducing a measure, with seven of you as cosponsors, to establish a Green Bank. Should we pass this measure, as I surely expect, Montgomery County will be the first county in the country to take this step, just as we were the first county in the country to adopt an energy benchmarking law last year on Earth Day.

What is a Green Bank? A financial instrument to drive low-cost capital to the green sector, helping to promote more investment in solar, in microgrids, in energy efficiency, and in new emerging technologies. It will be a win-win-win for our consumers, for our green companies, and for our local lenders.

One of the great things about our county is that we have residents who are national leaders in so many areas, and the Green Bank movement is no exception. Last year, I started working with Reed Hundt, the former Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission under President Clinton, who is now CEO of the Coalition for Green Capital. His organization is responsible for implementation of a Green Bank in a number of jurisdictions, including Connecticut. I invited him and his team to brief our County Executive's team and our staffs and you on this innovative approach. And I think it is fair to say that they made a compelling case. So compelling that the County Executive has requested \$20 million for a Green Bank as part of the county's settlement with Pepco-Exelon.

What makes this approach so compelling? The return on investment. In Connecticut, the home of the most successful Green Bank, private dollars have matched public dollars at a nine-to-one rate. Residential solar adoption is growing dramatically. For example, over the past two years, the Connecticut Green Bank, with a consortium of private banks led by US Bancorp, has supported 1,500 residential PV systems, 400 residential solar hot water systems, and 40 commercial solar systems. Fourteen MW of solar have been added by these projects, for only \$9.5 million in public investment.

By bundling Commercial PACE loans, like the program we just adopted, the Connecticut Green Bank went from almost nothing to \$30 million in loans in 18 months.

As Connecticut and the four other states with Green Banks show, this model can help to generate real investment in green energy and energy efficiency programs. But it only works if we make sure that the financial programs that the Green Bank offers meet the needs of consumers, suppliers, and the financial industry. That is why this bill specifically creates an implementation working group to advise us on how we can create the strongest program possible. I look forward to the participation of our business community and our residents in this vital effort. The Coalition for Green Capital, which has advised virtually every green bank in existence or in planning, will be providing pro bono technical assistance for this effort.

Colleagues, this bill could be a real game changer. A Green Bank can take the tremendous financial resources that we have in this county, as well as the burgeoning opportunities for solar, energy efficiency, microgrids, and other new technologies, and make us a leader in the green economy. And that will be good for business and good for the planet. And that is a good way to honor Earth Day. Thank you for your support.